areas. As a follow up to this, a National Presentation on Rural Business Hubs with the theme "Economic Empowerment through Panchayats" was held on the 5th November, 2004 at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in collaboration with the Confederation, of Indian Industry (CII) in which more than 1000 elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) from States and Union Territories and also about 20 members of the Cll participated. Several presentations were made on various economic activities which provide opportunities to set up Rural Business Hubs. As a follow up to the Conference, the Minister of Panchayati Raj has written to all elected Panchayat representatives who attended the presentation to indicate their respective areas of interest in setting up Rural Business Hubs. For wider dissemination, it has also been decided to publish advertisement in prominent newspapers for the purpose. Responses received would become the basis for developing State-wise projects for promotion of Rural Business Hubs through Panchayats.

To this end, Rural Business Hubs Council has been set up, co-chaired by the Minister, Panchayati Raj and Shri Sunil Munjal, former Chairperson of Cll, to promote public-private Panchayat partnership to foster Rural Business Hubs.

Nine States *viz.* Uttaranchal, Kerala, Karnataka, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Assam have been initially selected as focus States for the purpose of facilitating the establishment of such Rural Business Hubs. Representatives from the Ministry/CII have been assigned the responsibility of taking up the facilitation process in the States concerned for Rural Business Hubs to be established in association with Panchayati Raj Institujtions. Local Cll offices in the States concerned would be actively involved in the facilitation at the State level. Models such as the Chinese Town and Village Enterprises and the Thailand Model of "One Thamboh, One Product" (OTOP) could be used as initial examples for developing State-specific models.

Sale of Liquor at Petrol Pumps

176. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that some of the Petrol pumps in the Capital have got licences to sell liquor;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the permission of Government was sought in this regard; and

(d) if not, the reasons for granting the permission to petrol pumps?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) Three Retail Outlets of BPCL in Delhi have got L-53 licenses for retail vending of Beer/mixed alcoholic beverages through convenience stores located in their premises. These licences have been issued to the dealers by the Government of Delhi as per their extant policy.

Use of LPG as alternative fuel

t177. SHRI SURENDRA LATH: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made any efforts to explore the use of LPG as alternative fuel in backward and hilly areas of the country specially in Orissa in order to protect environment and prevent constant deforestation;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor and by when Government would consider the same and explore the possibility in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (c) To promote the use of LPG as alternative fuel, Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have been releasing LPG connections across the counter in all the areas, including backward and hilly areas of Orissa and other parts of the country, bearing in mind the beneficial consequences to the environment of moderating deforestation. Government have advised OMCs to concentrate their future expansion plans on semi-urban and rural areas and to take innovative steps like opening community kitchens in villages and sale of 5 kg cylinders to low-income group customers to increase the supply of LPG in uncovered areas.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.